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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS AND VITAL STATISTICS COLLECTION IN AFRICA, ADDIS ABABA, 21 - 26 OCTOBER 1985

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION

Opening and duration of meeting

1. The Working Group on the Development of Civil registration Systems and Vital Statistics Collection was held at the Headquarters of ECA in Addis Ababa from 21 to 26 October 1985. The meeting was convened with the financial support of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). It was opened by the Deputy Executive Secretary on behalf of the Executive Secretary.

Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by 28 experts from 20 English and French speaking countries having major responsibility for work in connection with civil registration systems and vital statistics collection. The countries were Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo and Zimbabwe.

3. The following organizations were represented: the International Institute for Vital Registration and Statistics (IIVRS), Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques (INED) and the National Tax Board of Sweden, and the Union douaniere et economique de l'Afrique central (UDEAC).

Elections of officials

4. Mr. John Prall (Liberia) was elected Chairman of the meeting; Mr. Augustin Mizele (Congo) Vice Chairman; Mr. John Ronoh (Kenya), rapporteur; and Mr. David Sieyojo (Cameroon), Assistant rapporteur.

B. AGENDA

5. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening address
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
4. Review of the methods of obtaining vital statistics information
5. Review of the progress achieved in the development and/or expansion of civil registration systems and vital statistics collection in Africa

   (a) Overview of the current status and problems
   (b) Case studies: Kenya, Chana, Congo and Niger

6. Remedial measures to attain reasonable event and spatial coverage with particular reference to the rural areas

7. Collection, processing, publication and dissemination of vital statistics

8. Evaluation and analysis of vital registration data

9. Programme of work

10. Recent Developments in Technical and Financial Assistance

11. Evaluation of Working Group

12. Adoption of Report

C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Opening address

6. In opening the working group, the Deputy Executive Secretary deputising for the Executive Secretary, noted that in recent years a number of African countries had taken positive steps for the development of civil registration systems and vital statistics collection with the result that some projects aimed at the improvement of the civil registration system and vital statistics collection exist.

7. The Deputy Executive Secretary referred to the various uses of vital records and statistics. In this connection he emphasized that because of the current and potential trend of population growth in the region, reliable vital statistics along with data from other sources especially population censuses and sample surveys are needed to monitor population dynamics in Africa. Apart from their uses in formulating, implementing and monitoring social and economic programmes, vital records are used as documentary evidence in support of issues of relevance to individuals.

8. Because of the various uses of vital statistics and records the Deputy Executive Secretary stated that a growing number of African countries are attaching importance to the development of civil registration systems. He observed, however, that despite this effort, within the past two decades or so, financial, technical and administrative problems have undermined progress. What has been achieved in the majority of the countries, he continued, has been the extension of the basic infrastructure such as the promulgation of compulsory nationwide civil registration legislations as well as improved methodologies and coverage in limited areas of their country. The Deputy Executive Secretary urged that this effort should continue until full coverage is attained.

9. Concluding, the Deputy Executive Secretary, expressed the hope that the Working Group, which had brought together officials from English and French speaking African countries having major responsibility for work in developing civil registration and vital statistics collection, would make valuable contributions to the development and expansion of work in this area.

D. REVIEW OF THE METHODS OF OBTAINING VITAL STATISTICS INFORMATION (Agenda item 4)

10. The secretariat introduced this agenda item on the basis of document ECA/STAT/WS/85/2 entitled "Review of the Methods of obtaining Vital Statistics". It was pointed out that the objective of the document was to review the main sources of vital statistics to enable the participants who are responsible for civil registration in their countries realise the statistical end use of their activities.

11. The secretariat indicated that the major sources of vital statistics include civil registration systems, population censuses, sample surveys and other administrative records.

12. It was recalled that the data collected from the civil registration systems could serve as a basis for estimating the natural increase of population, mortality trends, infant mortality, fertility rates, etc. Such information was useful for policy making, administration and research. Unfortunately civil registration systems in most African countries were still deficient; therefore other sources had to be used in order to generate the data required for economic and social development.

13. The advantages and disadvantages of the other sources of vital statistics were considered briefly by the working group. For example, population censuses could be used to estimate vital rates at the regional level, which was not possible for data collected through national demographic surveys. However, according to African experience, data from this source, especially estimates relating to fertility and mortality, were generally available only five years or more after the enumeration took place.

14. The participants noted that most of the demographic surveys carried out in the region in the past years were single round retrospective surveys. Questions relating to vital statistics which were usually asked in this type of survey led to errors due to dating of the events, faulty omissions or faulty declarations. The multi-round survey, carried out in a few African countries was designed to overcome some of the problems encountered in the single round survey, particularly as regards errors of omissions and dating. However, these advantages were out-weighed by the complexity and the high cost of the operation,

in addition to the fatigue of both the interviewers and the respondents in view of the repeated visits to the same sample of households. It was also reported that specific surveys on one of the components of population change (fertility, mortality and migration) were undertaken in a number of countries of the region, the largest one being the World Fertility Survey (WFS) in which 13 African countries participated. In addition, some non demographic surveys involving multi-stage area sampling were also used to collect, in the penultimate stage, information on demographic characteristics.

15. The dual record system, used in a few African countries including Chana, Kenya and Morocco, was mentioned. This is based on two independent data collection operations, usually a periodic household survey and a civil registration system.

16. Other possible sources of vital statistics information were also recalled. These included periodic administrative counts, undertaken especially in French speaking African countries, population registers or similar records maintained in the United Republic of Tanzania and Ethiopia for example, and parish registers. However, these sources were still far from providing reliable data required for estimating vital rates despite efforts being made by a few countries to improve them.

17. The working group agreed that of all the sources of vital statistics, only registration records provide all the data required on small area basis for estimating all the demographic data needed for planning and policy making source. The other sources are not substitutes for registration data, and have various advantages and disadvantages. Account should also be taken of human and financial resources available and of the local conditions in evaluating the various data sources.

18. Some participants felt that the advantages and disadvantages of the various sources of vital statistics could have been elaborated further and that a table illustrating this issue should have been included in the paper. In reply to the comments made in this connection the secretariat pointed out that the main objective of the working group, which was the development of civil registration systems and vital statistics collection in the region, should not be overlooked and that the present paper was intended to highlight the various sources of vital statistics for information purposes only.

E. REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND/OR EXPANSION OF CIVIL REGISTRATION SYSTEMS AND VITAL STATISTICS COLLECTION IN AFRICA: OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATUS AND PROBLEMS (Agenda item 5a)

19. In introducing the document, "Review of the Progress achieved in the development and/or expansion of Civil Registration (CR) Systems and Vital Statistics (VS) Collection in Africa: Overview of the current status and problems" (ECA/STAT/VS/85/3) the secretariat informed the meeting that the majority of the countries that have attained reasonable nationwide registration coverage were small island countries, whose terrains, sizes and patterns of population distribution are not representative of the rest of Africa. The countries are Cape Verde, Sao Tome, Seychelles and Mauritius.

20. It was explained that there were however a handful of other countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia and Libya that have civil registration systems whose coverage of events, especially births are fairly satisfactory.

21. In this connection, the secretariat concluded that not much progress had been made in the development and/or expansion of the civil registration systems and vital statistics collection within the past two decades or so. However, it was pointed out, that recently a number of African countries had shown interest in the development of civil registration system and vital statistics collection by the formulation and implementation of projects for the development and improvement of civil registration systems. These projects have made notable progress in extending the basic infrastructure of the CR/VS system such as the promulgation of legislation for compulsory nationwide registration in the country as well as strengthening improved methodologies and coverage in limited areas of their country.

22. About the problems of the civil registration systems and vital statistics collection, the secretariat identified the following: allocation of insufficient funds to this activity by national governments, lack of motivation on the part of the public, problems connected with registration officials, administrative mismanagement and difficulties encountered in the rural areas.

23. Among these problems, those connected with finance were shown to be common and persistent. The secretariat noted that a number of African countries do not yet attach enough importance to the work of civil registration. This trend is responsible for the allocation of inadequate resources,especially finance, to the activities of civil registration in African countries.

24. To supplement the presentation of the secretariat, the representative of the International Institute of Vital Registration and Statistics (IIVRS) stated that a survey conducted by his organization showed that the organizational structure for civil registration systems and vital statistics collection differs from one African country to another.

25. In the discussion that followed participants elaborated on some of the problems of the CR/VS in their countries, such as the inaccessibility of some rural localities, the dispersed settlement patterns and payment of fees for the first proof of registration. These problems ought to be addressed before any progress can be made in developing the existing systems.

26. It was brought to the attention of the working group, that a special problem of registration within the rural areas existed in some countries, namely: extensive population movements by especially nomadic groups. For the registration of this mobile rural population, it was requested that a methodological study should be prepared, preferably in collaboration with international and regional agencies, such as ECA and the Sahel Institute.

27. Participants alluded to the high costs of civil registration systems, a concern that brought into focus the internal generation of revenue. One group of participants was of the opinion that given this situation, an attempt should be made for the system to generate some revenue by, for example, requiring users to pay the cost of the transmission of the registration records. Another concern about revenue was expressed in the form of the need for minimization of the expenses of the civil registration systems by using the services of other government agencies to provide some of their programmes, such as, motivation and enlightenment campaign.

28. The working group was told that CR/VS development is best considered within the social and economic context of a particular country, with particular attention paid to improvement in the level of literacy of the population.

29. A participant, in re-examining the problems of the civil registration in African countries argued for a reassessment of the type of CR/VS system suitable for countries in the region. The current system, he pointed out, must have inherent shortcomings since it caters for only a tiny fraction of the population of the countries involved.

30. In reviewing some of the issues raised in the discussion, the secretariat pointed out that the debate had clearly brought out the lack of finance as one of the major problems of CR/VS systems in Africa and urged the participants to re-assess the issue of recurrent costs in externally funded projects in the light of the ability of the government to take over such costs at the end of the project.

31. About the need for a methodological study on nomadic population registration procedures, the working group agreed to include it under the future work programme.

F. CASE STUDIES: KENYA, GHANA, CONGO AND NIGER (Agenda item 5b)

32. The secretariat introduced this agenda item on the basis of background documents ECA/STAT/VS/85/4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 on civil registration projects in Kenya, Ghana, Congo and Niger respectively.

33. It was reported that although the civil registration systems in the four countries date back to the end of the 19th or beginning of 20th century, it was only at the beginning of the 1960's that compulsory registration of births and deaths was extended to the entire population. Unfortunately, the civil registration systems in these countries did not work well, therefore the countries had to draw up projects for the improvement and expansion of their systems.

34. The long-term objectives of the projects in the four countries included:

- the establishment of an efficient birth and death registration system for the entire population, and

- the production on a continuing basis of reliable vital statistics for deriving estimates of the country's birth and death rates and for evaluating the country's national population programmes.

35. The immediate objectives were to establish a comprehensive organization, to improve methods and procedures of registration, to train the civil registration personnel, to educate and enlighten the population and to obtain reliable vital statistics, particularly on births and deaths.

36. Some differences existed in the strategies adopted to achieve the immediate and long-term objectives. While in Kenya, Ghana and Congo, the civil registration projects envisaged to cover specific pilot areas before extending gradually the operations to other parts of the country, the Niger project right away aimed at a full geographical coverage. A particular feature of the Ghana project was the institution of a sample registration system.

37. The participants from the four countries included in the case studies made a few corrections on the presentation and the documents prepared by the secretariat and gave supplementary information on the status of their projects.

38. After describing the organizational structure of births and deaths registry in his country, the participant from Kenya stated that two parallel programmes and corresponding committees were set up in order to implement the project activities. These were the Improvement of Registration System Programme (IRS) and the Civil Registration Enlightenment Campaign (CREC). The IRS Committee, which comprises representatives of the Registrar-General, Ministry of Health, Central Bureau of Statistics, Population Studies and Research Institute (University of Nairobi), provides advice and approves the IRS programme. Similarly, the CREC Committee, which consists of representatives of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, Ministry of Health, Provincial Administration (Office of the President), Ministry of Basic and Higher Education, chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, directs the enlightenment campaign. The participant from Kenya acknowledged that the project had encountered some problems, particularly on manpower, office accommodation and equipment. In respect of the latter, heavy vehicles were initially used to collect the civil registration forms, and this proved to be expensive. The project has since acquired motorcycles which are more appropriate. Also, the quality of information from assistant chiefs was not up to the standard required in a number of cases. The project was being extended to difficult areas. The participant felt that this extension should be done gradually, taking into account the human and financial resources available. Experience has shown that the registration coverage dropped when the activities were extended to cover additional large areas at the same time.

39. One of the participants from Ghana, after also describing briefly the organizational structure which registers births, deaths and foetal deaths, reported that the Registry has been able to provide all towns of 5,000 and over with registration facilities. There were at the moment 324 registries and 280 centres throughout the country. Registration facilities were being extended to other areas with population less than 5,000, that is the rural areas. To date, the spatial coverage was between 60 and 65 per cent. Feasibility studies were being conducted by regional and district registration officers for expansion purposes in other rural areas.

40. At the time the third phase of the sample registration system was to be carried out, the UNFPA withdrew its financial and technical assistance and the Ghana Government was expected to undertake the project. However, because of unfavourable economic conditions, the third phase had not been carried out. The vehicles provided by the UNFPA and the Ghana Government had all broken down due to lack of funds to maintain them, and as a result the Registry could not continue with the field work. The Registry was also faced with acute shortage of registration documents and forms, in short there was lack of inputs. It was indicated however that the sample registration system created awareness in areas where interest in civil registration was either low or non-existent and this awareness was still there despite the current difficulties.

41. The participant from Niger pointed out that, according to the law, the new civil registration system covered the whole country. In practice, however, the nomadic population has been left out in the first stage but action was being taken to study measures aimed at covering this population group as well. He stated that the problems raised by the secretariat in its presentation were being solved. The only problem which remained was the delay in transmitting the statistical forms to the National Statistical Office, especially in the urban areas. The solution to this problem lay with the strengthening of civil registration personnel, which involved recruitment of new staff and training. The Government was taking measures to strengthen the civil registration personnel within the limits of the resources available. During the first quarter of 1985, the coverage of events was 19 per cent for births and 8 per cent for deaths while during the second quarter the rates had risen to 75 per cent for births and 35 per cent for deaths.

42. The participant from Congo pointed out that the salient feature of the civil registration system in his country was the transfer of the location of the civil registration project from the Ministry of Planning to the Ministry of Local Government in 1984. A National Directorate of Civil Registration was established and measures were taken in order to solve the problems encountered by the project. In this connection, a circular was issued to all regional authorities to request them to dissociate the registration of vital events from the payment of the regional tax. This will be followed by appropriate legal measures. The payment of allowances for registration assistants who had worked so far free of charge was also being considered. The issue of the transmission of statistical forms has also been solved. The main concern was presently the setting up of a permanent structure, especially on the questions of co-ordination and the link between the civil registration and the administrative structure of the country.

43. Some other participants also described briefly their experiences. In Burundi, the question of co-ordination is not a big problem. The Ministry of Home Affairs is in charge of all administrative divisions. Moreover, the size of the country is relatively small and the population speaks the same language. The rate of salary paid to the civil registration officers is determined at the village level. In Cameroon, activities towards the improvement and expansion of the civil registration system had been carried out since 1978 although there was not a specific project supported by UNFPA. The processing of the statistical forms was done on a continuing basis for the urban areas, particularly for Yaounde and Douala. An evaluation survey was carried out in small towns and some rural areas to assess the performance of the civil registration system in these areas. Also, a national seminar on civil registration was conducted in Douala in 1984 and a manual for civil registration personnel was prepared. Finally, a new civil registration law was adopted.

44. In reply to an invitation of the secretariat, the participants pointed out various issues which should receive due attention in the discussions at the committee level. These related to the following:

- suitable administrative location of the civil registration system
- co-ordination of the civil registration system
- administrative machinery
- training of personnel
- communications
- logistics
- storage of documents
- identification of the population base for the calculation of vital rates
- assessment of the validity of the rates calculated
- issuance of birth and death certificates free of charge
- inclusion of nationality of parents in the civil registration forms

45. It was also suggested that strategies aimed at the achievement of the short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives should be adopted and ways and means for implementing these strategies should be proposed, beginning with the Governments concerned and the support which could be received from external resources. It was further suggested that recurrent expenditures should be supported by national and regional budgets and that politics should be dissociated from the implementation of civil registration projects.

C. REMEDIAL MEASURES TO ATTAIN REASONABLE EVENT AND SPATIAL COVERAGE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE RURAL AREAS (Agenda item 6)

46. For consideration of this agenda item the Working Group was divided into two committees: one for English and the other for French-speaking participants. The reports of the two committees are attached as Annexes I and II.

E. COLLECTION, PROCESSING, PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF VITAL STATISTICS (Agenda item 7)

47. The secretariat referred the Working Group to the background document ECA/STAT/WG/85/6 which formed the basis for the discussion of the topic.

48. It was indicated that the issues for discussion are:

- centralized and decentralized structures of vital statistics collection;
- data processing;
- forms of statistical documentation of vital statistics information;
- tabulation of vital statistics; and
- publication and dissemination of data

49. It was pointed out that although in the development of a registration system priority should be given to the development of the necessary strategies and the institution of effective administrative machinery, the vital statistics which may be derived from the registration system should not be completely ignored.

50. Reference was made to the advantages and disadvantages of centralized and decentralized administrative arrangements for the statistical processing of registration records. In particular, the difficulties in respect of movement of documents between agencies in a decentralized system and the resultant delay in the processing and publication of the necessary data were mentioned.

51. On the other hand, there is also the tendency for the statistical processing of registration records to be ignored completely in some instances of centralized administrative arrangements.

52. In the area of data processing the need to prepare such documents as tabulation programmes as well as code lists and coding/editing instructions for use by the data processing staff was pointed out.

53. It was also stressed that manual processing of registration records should not be ignored. It is desirable to use that procedure where necessary. The great potential of micro computers in the processing of registration records was also mentioned though some difficulties regarding availability of appropriate softwares were noted.

54. With respect to publication of statistical data it was stressed that countries need to be up to date about printing techniques in order to reduce the long time lag between the collection of data and their publication. For instance, the possibility of publishing information on computer print-outs by photo-offset procedure or through the use of photo copiers was pointed out.

55. It was indicated that in order to disseminate the results of the registration system and also to promote public awareness, the publication programme of the registration system should include highlights of the results which would be of interest to the general public.

56. Finally the Working Group requested that ECA should prepare recommendations regarding priority tabulations for the guidance of African countries. National officials should also prepare periodically main tables using the ECA recommendations as guidelines so that a brief analysis of the data could be undertaken.

I. EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS OF VITAL REGISTRATION DATA (Agenda item 5)

57. The secretariat introduced this agenda item on the basis of document ECA/SDD/WG/84/5/7 entitled "Evaluation and Analysis of Vital Registration Data." It was indicated that the need for evaluating vital statistics before their use was due to the fact that in almost all the African countries these statistics are still deficient especially as far as their complete rate and their geographical coverage are concerned. Moreover, there was the problem of determination of the demographic base i.e. the population concerned with the events observed, which arises during the analysis of these statistics.

58. As regards the problem of evaluation, the secretariat indicated that there were several possible methods for evaluating births and deaths statistics from civil registration, but only two methods have been considered in the background document. These are the use of the balancing equation and the method of direct checks using particularly two independent lists of names.

59. After drawing the attention of participants to the limits of the use of the balancing equation (need to have information from survey and other population censuses, problem of quality of data obtained from the censuses) the secretariat gave a few examples on the use of the balancing equation to estimate the rate of coverage of births and deaths by the civil registration system. The secretariat then indicated that, if conditions permitted, it was possible to use independent lists of births and/or deaths obtained for example from a coverage survey in order to match the names contained in these lists with those recorded in the civil registration registers to determine degree of completeness of vital statistics.

60. The secretariat pointed out the fact that where the civil registration system is functioning relatively well (particularly in some large towns) the analysis of the data collected could yield interesting information even if they are deficient and did not have a national coverage. In particular such information would make it possible:

(i) to monitor the evolution in time and space of the coverage of the events and the internal consistency of the data;

(ii) to obtain directly on an annual basis the main parameters of population change and hence to constitute, if the data permitted, a time series on births and deaths statistics which was lacking in Africa;

(iii) to identify on the basis of the trends of the coverage of events and the accuracy of the indicators obtained, the administrative units where the development of the civil registration system encountered the greatest difficulty so as to undertake appropriate action with a view to improving the reporting of vital events.

61. Finally the secretariat indicated that in order to monitor the quality of birth and death registration, it was possible to calculate annually some demographic indicators for which the degree of reliability could be determined. It was also advisable to publish periodically a report pointing out the problems encountered and the solutions proposed.

62. The discussions on this item concentrated mainly on:

- the difficulty in using the balancing equation to evaluate statistics on births and deaths in view of the problems linked with the estimation of migration and the fact that many African countries have conducted only their first censuses.

- the limits of the method of dual record system such as high costs, problems of matching names and other particulars, questions about the independence of the two listings, etc..

63. The participants also suggested:

- the use of all available evaluation methods, particularly the indirect methods of Preston, Brass, Courbage and Farques. It was also suggested that a question on whether births and deaths which had occurred during the last 12 months have been reported or not to the civil registration office should be included in censuses.

64. Finally, the representative of INED informed the participants about the existing collaboration between his institution and some African countries for the analysis of death statistics from civil registration data. The method of analysis used seemed to have given good results in the case of the town of Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Similar experiments were being undertaken or planned for Morocco and Mali.

J. PROGRAMME OF WORK (Agenda item 9)

65. The committee after considerable deliberation adopted the Programme of Action in Annex III.

K. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (Agenda item 10)

66. The secretariat introduced this agenda item on the basis of the document "Recent Developments in Technical and Financial Assistance" (ECA/STAT/VS/85/8). The technical and financial co-operation activities of the United Nations agencies in the improvement of civil registration systems and vital statistics collection in Africa were described. These cover (a) the provision of technical advisory services through regional and inter-regional experts, (b) the funding of national projects, (c) the provision of training abroad through fellowships and study tours and (d) the organisation of regional working groups, seminars and meetings.

67. These forms of direct assistance to the African countries are funded by UNFPA and executed by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development (DTCD) with the backstopping of the United Nations Statistical Office and the Statistics Division of ECA.

68. The secretariat explained the functioning of UNFPA which is guided by its Governing Council. Attempts have been made in the past to get the African representatives on this Council to put forward Africa's priority needs in the field of data collection and analysis but these attempts have not been successful.

69. The actual UNFPA guidelines on the approval for technical and financial assistance for a project aimed at developing the civil registration system and vital statistics collection were presented:

i) Existence of laws and regulations on civil status as well as an administrative infrastructure responsible for its operation.

ii) Setting up of a national committee on civil registration.

iii) Moral and financial commitment of the authorities to effectively continue to support the operation after the end of UNFPA's assistance to the project.

iv) Priority not only to the registration of vital events but also to the relevant vital statistics.

70. During the discussions which followed, participants emphasised the importance of civil registration systems in obtaining demographic data for development plans. It was noted that United Nations has spent money but the results have not been encouraging because governments are not sufficiently convinced. It was suggested that a Decade for Civil Registration in Africa should be declared in order to raise the interest and participation of governments.

71. Participants referred to the problems of the financial support of UNFPA and the limitation of its donation. It was reported that UNFPA "Assistance may be provided for starting or strengthening of civil registration projects in pilot areas. However, such assistance will normally be limited to a duration of two or three years. Expansion of the scheme to a nation-wide system is the responsibility of the country concerned."

72. Several participants pointed out that UNFPA assistance should not necessarily be limited to pilot areas, in the narrow sense of the term, since some projects on the improvement and expansion of the civil registration systems and vital statistics collection could aim from the beginning at a nation-wide coverage, depending on the local conditions and the strategy adopted by the Governments concerened.

73. Questions about training for which UNFPA has always shown great interest and has in the past provided financial assistance were also raised. Participants pointed out that at the first stage, fellowships and study tours should be done within Africa in countries which have succeeded in establishing efficient demonstration or pilot projects on civil registration system, rather than proceeding outside.

74. It was observed that assistance in funding vital registration system projects can be obtained not only from UNFPA but also from several other donor agencies including USAID, SIDA and UNICEF. At the request of participants the representative of IIVRS explained the functions of his organization. He pointed out that his organization is not a funding agency. Its activities consist of enlightening governments on the importance of civil registration system and vital statistics collection, by the organization of regional meetings of experts, the publication of Newsletters and Technical papers.

L. EVALUATION OF WORKING GROUP (Agenda item 11)

75. Evaluation forms were distributed to all participants. The secretariat explained the purpose of the evaluation exercise which was to enable ECA to ascertain the views of participants on how to improve the organisation and content of future meetings. The results of this evaluation are given in Annex IV.

H. ADOPTION OF REPORT

76 The Working Group adopted its report after making a number of amendments to the draft.

REPORT OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMITTEE ON REMEDIAL MEASURES TO ATTAIN REASONABLE EVENT AND SPATIAL COVERAGE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE RURAL AREAS

1. The background document for the discussion of the topic was ECA/STAT/VS/85/5.1. The issues discussed were the following:

- Agencies responsible for the civil registration system;
- Special provisions for the rural areas;
- Civil registration documents;
- Training of civil registration personnel;
- Logistics support;
- Enlightenment and motivation of the public;and
- Legislation.

a. Agencies responsible for the civil registration system

2. Discussion on the agencies responsible for civil registration system was preceded by brief opening remarks by the secretariat.

3. The issue regarding the most suitable agency to administer a civil registration system was raised and the historical background for some of the existing arrangements was pointed out.

4. It was stressed that in a number of African countries the registration system was the responsibility of the Registrar-General's Office. Often, however, the activities regarding civil registration was delegated to junior staff of the department.

5. It was also indicated that in the 1960's some Registrar-General's Offices started taking greater interest in the civil registration system.

6. The case of Ghana where the administrative responsibility for civil registration had changed from one agency to another over a period in the search for the most suitable administrative arrangement was also mentioned.

7. It was suggested that the Working Group should give consideration to the factors which need to be taken into account in assigning responsibility for civil registration and vital statistics.

8. In the discussion which followed the secretariat's presentation, a view was expressed that up to now the factors which have guided the selection of the appropriate agency with responsibility for civil registration seemed to have involved the identification of the agency which would be using the output of the registration system or the agency with the necessary infrastructure down to the lowest administrative unit of a country.

9. It was however pointed out that when a civil registration system is assigned to an existing agency with primary responsibilities for other activities, the registration system was often accorded a lower status.

10. It was therefore suggested that it might be necessary to set up an autonomous agency to be solely responsible for the registration system. In response to the above suggestion it was indicated that an autonomous agency might face the problem of representation at a country's cabinet level and also excessive cost. Further, it was stressed that it would be difficult for an autonomous agency to operate without the support of other specialized agencies.

11. It was also emphasized that civil registration is an administrative function requiring effective multi-ministerial co-operation, hence, it is essential to base its development on the existing administrative structure of a country.

12. The strategies being developed for the Kenya civil registration programme was described at length to demonstrate the principle of multi-ministerial responsibility for a civil registration system.

13. It was stressed that the various agencies to be involved in the registration system are not required merely to assist in a marginal way but rather to assume responsibility for those aspects of the registration system for which they have specialized expertise. Thus in the approach being developed in Kenya, the Registrar-General's Office has full-time staff at provincial, district and sub-district levels. Below the sub-district level, the Registrar-General's Office works through the Provincial Administration and health institutions for the recording of information on vital events. The other major aspect of the registration system, namely, public enlightenment and motivation is the responsibility of the government agency or agencies responsible for such activities.

14. It was emphasized that effective co-ordination of the activities of the various agencies is essential. In the Kenya programme, co-ordination is effected through a standing committee of ministers and an inter-ministerial advisory committee at the highest level.

15. The principle of effective multi-ministerial co-operation for civil registration system was generally appreciated by the Working Group. In this regard it was pointed out that in some countries jealousies among various agencies make it difficult to obtain effective co-operation.

16. A view was also expressed that though civil registration may be considered primarily as an administrative activity and efforts need to be concentrated in developing strategies for the system and in setting up the necessary administrative machinery, the statistical and other uses should not be ignored. In this connection, it was recalled that in many African countries which have achieved some improvement in the registration system, it was the statistical agencies which initiated the efforts.

17. Finally, it was pointed out that though the discussion has shown that it is desirable to assign responsibility for the administration of civil registration to the agency with the necessary infrastructure down to the lowest administrative unit of a country, it did not imply that countries should transfer responsibility from agencies currently responsible for the system. If, however, a country is initiating a programme for a civil registration, then due consideration should be given to assigning the administrative responsibility for the exercise to the agency whose organizational structure goes down to the lowest administrative unit.

b. Special provisions for the rural areas

18. In introducing the topic on provisions for the rural areas, the secretariat recalled a case 25 years ago when an illiterate woman in a village produced a record regarding the name and date of birth of her child when the woman was asked about the age of her child. The record had been given to the woman by the local authority at the time of the child's birth.

19. The story was narrated to illustrate the point that it was not always true that the rural community did not value vital registration records. It was therefore stressed that the important factor to consider is not only the motivation of the rural population to register events but also the provision of the necessary facilities to make it convenient for the events to be registered.

20. In the discussion which followed, the Kenya experience was again used to illustrate the principles which needed to be kept in mind in the development of strategies for rural areas.

21. It was however pointed out that the details of the Kenya programme and their application in other countries would depend on the circumstances of the countries concerned.

22. The main principles involved the need for a centralized administration and registration facilities at the lowest administrative unit of a country. Strategies should then be evolved for communication between the central administration and the registration personnel at the lowest administrative unit.

23. As indicated earlier, in the Kenya programme, the Registrar-General's Office constituted the central administration and its field staff were the district registrars and assistant district registrars. Actual recording of events was done by assistant chiefs at sub-locations which are the lowest administrative units of the country. The assistant chiefs are employees of the Provincial Administration.

24. Village elders and traditional birth attendants are also used to motivate parents to register events and/or to notify assistant chiefs about the occurrence of an event. After events have been recorded on registration forms, assistant district registrars are used in their collection for transmission to district registrars for the formal legal registration of the events.

25. A question regarding the appropriate primary registration unit was raised. It was pointed out that existing administrative sub-division should be used as the primary registration unit since there might be confusion and it would also be costly if special units were created only for the registration system.

c. Civil registration documents

26. In the introductory remarks made by the secretariat to initiate discussion on civil registration documents, the attention of the participants was drawn to the list of forms for registration in the Manual of Civil Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages prepared by ECA.

27. It was indicated that the list of forms has been provided for illustrative purposes and that not all of them are required at the early stages of the development of a civil registration system. In this connection, it was noted that in the African situation emphasis has not been placed on the form relating to causes of death.

28. The problem regarding the distinction between underlying and immediate causes of death was pointed out. In order to obtain uniformity of cause of death statistics it was suggested that the international form of medical certificate be used for collecting information on cause of death and the underlying cause of death be selected according to the international rules promulgated by the World Health Organization. However, such forms need not be introduced at the outset of the development of a civil registration system.

29. On the content of registration forms the Working Group was informed that the United Nations recommendations provide a full list of topics for inclusion on registration forms. It was however pointed out that the full list should not be attempted at the outset. A simple form with a short list of items should be introduced at the early stages and greater effort made to improve coverage.

30. Following the remarks by the secretariat, a detailed presentation of the registration forms being used in the Kenya civil registration programme was provided.

31. It was pointed out that the registration form served also as the register of events. Further the forms have been designed in such a way that an acknowledgement of the notification of birth (or burial permit in the case of death) could be issued when the registration form has been completed.

32. In the discussions which followed, the Working Group pointed out the need to print registration forms on good quality paper for record preservation and to use different colours of paper for the forms for the various events.

d. Training of civil registration personnel

33. The relevant paragraphs in the background document for the consideration of this topic are 38 to 51.

34. Introducing the topic, the secretariat indicated that in developing training programmes for civil registration personnel, due consideration should be given to the various levels of personnel.

35. It was pointed out that study tours of short duration would be suitable for the top-level personnel but much longer-term training would be necessary for district registrars.

36. The need to adapt training programme to the type of work to be performed by trainees was stressed. In this connection it was noted that some of the overseas training programmes for civil registration personnel have not proved adequate in the African environment.

37. The Working Group was therefore invited to give consideration to the type of training programmes which would be suitable to African situation and make appropriate recommendations.

38. The attention of the Working Group was also called to the two training manuals prepared by ECA and IIVRS which African countries could use as guidelines in the preparation of training manuals to suit their particular conditions.

39. It was noted that UNFPA major inputs in civil registration in developing countries have been in the area of training. It was also noted that emphasis should be put on local training.

40. Three main types of training were identified. These are 'desk training' seminars and briefing sessions.

41. It was also pointed out that due consideration should be given to the type of personnel to be trained. In this connection three main categories of personnel may be distinguished. These are: the top-level professional staff at the civil registration head office; the senior field staff who are employees of the civil registration office and the junior field staff who are employees of other collaborating agencies.

42. The professional staff consists of statisticians/demographers, administrator and the personnel responsible for the public enlightenment programme who should have qualification in history, sociology or literature and with a flair for journalism.

43. It was pointed out that in developing a new registration system it would be desirable to recruit new professionals and given on the job training for about two years. The rational is that such professionals would come to the job with a relatively open mind.

44. In the training of field staff it was noted that district registrars would require only briefings and no special courses need be organized. It was stressed that discussions should be held with district registrars to share ideas before finalization of a training manual.

45. Assistant district registrars, however, should be given thorough training, and the training period would be fourteen days. It was also stressed that the assistant registrars would require quarterly briefing discussion sessions at the registration head office. Such sessions should be conducted by the professional staff of the head office and should not be delegated to district registrars.

46. It was also suggested that in any subsequent expansion of the registration programme, assistant district registrars should be considered for promotion to the level of district registrars.

47. Further it was indicated that the head office should train the chief clerks of district registrars since such clerks would be actively involved in the registration programme.

48. With respect to the training of the field staff from other agencies it was noted that it would involve a large number of personnel and their training would be spread over a number of areas.

49. It was pointed out that preparation for the training would last from four to five months and that the following should be given due consideration:

- preparation of list of activities
- mapping and preparation of codes for the administrative units
- list of trainees and their designation
- calendar of classes to be organized (each class should have 30-50 trainees)
- discussion with district authorities at the district level
- accommodation for classes
- printing of necessary documents (these should be ready before the start of the training)
- preparation of visual aids
- preparation of folders containing the necessary documents
- instructors
- preparation of lecture notes by instructors

50. The need to conduct training for the lowest level of the registration personnel in the local language was noted and it was stressed that the training should consist of lectures and practical exercises. Questions and answers sessions should also be organized and following that a "Points to Remember" pamphlet may be prepared for use by the registration assistants.

51. It was also pointed out that the ceremonial opening of the training sessions should be performed by the representative of the district administration.

52. In the discussion which followed the presentation by the secretariat, the Working Group drew attention to problems which some countries might face with regard to infrastructural facilities for the training programme.

53. It was also indicated that in some countries regulations governing recruitment tended to make it difficult to recruit middle-level personnel with adequate qualification for some civil registration activities. Related to this problem is the low status of registrars in some countries which also make it difficult to attract qualified personnel.

54. The question of training manual was also raised and it was noted that the countries which have prepared such manuals include: Ghana, Swaziland, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Nigeria.

e. Logistic support

55. The relevant paragraphs in the background document relating to this topic are 52 to 59.

56. In the opening remarks the attention of the Working Group was called to the tendency to include a large fleet of vehicles in projects submitted for external assistance. It was stressed that efforts should be made to use existing public transportation wherever possible. Vehicles may only be purchased to supplement public transport in special areas where they are considered vital. Likewise motor cycles and bicycles may be used for the collection of documents.

57. Other logistic support required in a civil registration system include a wide net-work of administrative infrastructure as well as printing and data processing facilities. The Working Group also recognized the need for adequate office accommodation with the necessary storage facilities at the head office and the district registration offices.

58. In the area of data processing it was recognized that it is not essential for a main frame computer installation to be within the agency responsible for civil registration. What is required is the accessibility to the computer installation. Further, micro computers may be acquired for some of the data processing needs. Such micro computers may also be used to feed information into a main frame computer when the need arises.

59. In the discussion it was noted that finance and shortage of printing paper have proved to be major bottlenecks in civil registration programmes. It was, however, pointed out that there was the need for countries to guard against over-dependence on external assistance.

f. Enlightenment and motivation of the public

60. In introducing the topic, the secretariat observed that registration officials are not the suitable personnel for a public enlightenment programme; hence it was essential for the programme to be assigned to the agency or agencies with the relevant expertise.

61. An attempt was then made to examine the reasons for initiating a programme to motivate the public as part of a civil registration programme. It was noted that the public need to know the advantages to be derived by the individual, family and community. Hence, in addition to the general national uses of registration records the benefits to the individual, family and community need to be stressed.

62. Using the public enlightenment programme developed in the Kenya civil registration project as an example, it was pointed out that the objective of a civil registration enlightenment programme is to change any public attitude and behaviour which are not conducive to the registration of vital events and make the public aware of their obligation to register vital events.

63. It was pointed out that in the programme, three elements may be distinguished. The first element is the development of the appropriate message which will emphasize the benefit which the individual will derive from the registration system and the diffusion of the message.

64. The second element is the identification of the audience to whom the message will be addressed. In the Kenya case two groups have been identified. These are the adult population in rural areas and children in schools. The necessary documents have been prepared in respect of the programme for the adult rural population but due to some administrative problems the document for the schools programme are yet to be prepared. It was stressed that the identification of the audience would ensure an organized campaign and thus make it possible to exercise the necessary control on the programme and thus maximize its effect.

65. The third element in the enlightenment programme is the selection of the media. In this connection it was pointed out that in addition to the coventional mass media it was essential to select also the type of media which will ensure that the target audience was being reached.

66. The Working Group was informed that the Kenya programme involved the use of the 'human media'. Key personnel from agencies responsible for Culture and Social Services, Adult Education and Health Education had face-to-face talk with village elders to enlighten and motivate them with respect to the registration system. The village elders in turn passed on the message to their various communities. The role of the village elders was to diffuse the registration message in the community by motivating parents to register events. If legal informants failed to have an event registered then the village elder was to notify the registration assistant about the event.

67. In the discussion it was pointed out that a civil registration enlightenment programme needs to be continuous hence such programme should include plans for the follow-up of the initial campaign. The Working Group was informed that in the Kenya programme, follow-up activities were suggested by the field staff. Divisional co-ordinating Committees were then formed for such purposes but this aspect of the programme has not been successful. Participants also shared country experiences concerning programmes to motivate the public to register events.

68. The question of inducements to register events was also raised. The inducements include the compulsory production of birth/death certificate for various public services including enrolment of children at school. It was pointed out that great care should be exercised in the use of such inducements otherwise innocent parties such as children may be unnecessarily punished for the non-registration of events.

69. Finally, the need for a well planned and continuing public enlightenment and motivation campaign as part of a civil registration development programme was endorsed by the Working Group.

g. Legislation

70. Introducing the topic, the secretariat noted that there was the need for a legal frame work for the operation of a registration system at the outset even though a view has been expressed in some quarters that a civil registration law should be considered at a later stage in the development of a civil registration system.

71. It was pointed out that the view that consideration of the legislation should be delayed may have been prompted by the inflexible nature of some civil registration laws. Such laws tend to frustrate the operation of the civil registration system since any innovation needed to improve the system would require a new legislation. It was stressed that particularly at the initial stages of a civil registration system the law needs to be as flexible as possible.

72. The Working Group endorsed the view expressed in the background document that civil registration law should cover only core elements which tend to be relatively permanent; and provision made for the preparation of rules and regulations, which can be changed through administrative processes, to cover other elements which are subject to change over short periods in response to changing circumstances.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

I. Introduction

1. The 1980 Working Group on Civil Registration System and Vital Statistics Collection which was held in Nairobi made a number of recommendations for the development and improvement of civil registration. Five years after the Nairobi meeting, only limited progress had been made in initiating satisfactory systems in the region. The 1985 Working Group examined some of the reasons for relatively poor project performance in this area. In the meantime, African Governments had shown interest in the development of viable systems and had prepared more projects for partial funding by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

2. The 1985 Working Group therefore reached the conclusion that a Programme of Action for the next 5 years was necessary. Such a programme should not only specify the general outlines of a new strategy but should also propose measures to develop or improve the organization and administration of civil registration with particular emphasis on rural areas.

II. Formulation of strategy

3. The main elements in the new strategy are (a) the establishment of a Steering Committee made up of the Ministers and/or their permanent secretaries of the relevant organizations which have direct responsibility for any aspect of civil registration; (b) the establishment of two parallel but integrated programmes, one to deal with actual registration and the other with public enlightenment; and (c) phased implementation of a nation-wide system.

4. The functions of a Steering Committee of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics are well spelt out in UN recommendations and will not be repeated here. Mention will only be made of the fact that the existence of such a committee which must be set up with Cabinet approval will help to smooth over difficulties usually arising from inter-ministerial jealousies and lack of co-ordination.

5. With respect to (b), it is now generally recognised that persons who are skilled in registration are not necessarily those with the necessary expertise to enlighten the public in connection with the aims and procedures of the registration system. This issue is discussed in more detail in the section below on public enlightenment.

6. A phased approach for the development of a civil registration system which will depend on available resources, both financial and technical, was recommended. The first phase is usually an experimental or pilot one in which the instruments of registration are tested. Progression from one phase to another should be dependent on the success achieved at the preceding stage, taking into account the human and financial resources available.

7. The Working Group did not wish to spell out in too much technical detail the above strategy since these are usually the function of conditions in a particular country. However for the implementation of a phased programme, the Group expressed its preference for the selection of compact entities over the sample areas approach.

8. The Group was however unable to agree on a single model which should be adopted by every African country. Information on the approaches used in countries such as Kenya and Niger should be widely disseminated to other countries to enable them decide how they want to organize their system.

III. Training

9. The Group recognised four levels of training: the first for policy-makers which should usually take the form of a two-week study tour to an African country with a fairly satisfactory civil registration system. The second type of training should be for high level technicians and should last for three months. This should be held in the same type of country described in the preceding part of this paragraph and should consist of both lectures and job attachment. The third should be for district registrars for a period of fourteen days. The fourth level of training should be for registration assistants and should last for two to seven days. It should have a well prepared time-table and the content of training should be geared towards the actual functions the registration assistants are expected to perform. Such training should be within each country and should normally be held in different locations at different times.

10. Training outside Africa should be given a lower priority and should take place after the initial training within the region.

11. All training should also take place before each level of personnel actually starts performing its functions. Thus for projects partly funded from external sources the training programme could constitute either a pre-project activity or the first phase of the implementation of the project.

12. Provision should also be made for the training of trainers. In addition briefing sessions should be organised for personnel involved in the public enlightenment campaigns in connection with civil registration.

13. There was need for the training of other specialists, especially computer staff in the use of micro-computers and its associated software. Such training can be given abroad if no local facilities for this exist.

IV. Measures to develop or improve the organisation and administration of civil registration with particular reference to rural areas

14. The Group examined in detail some of the factors which have retarded the development of civil registration systems. These include insufficient financial provision, lack of motivation on the part of the public, administrative management problems and lack of adequate skills on the part of registration officials. In rural areas, progress has been even slower due to the high level of illiteracy, the difficult terrain, dispersed settlements, transport and communication problems as well as an understandable lack of any substantial motivation.

15. Some of the measures proposed are the use of an existing administrative machinery with links up to the grass roots level. Thus irrespective of the actual location of a civil registry links have to be forged with such a ministry whose paid officials would be the registration officials at the lower levels of the civil administration.

16. There is also need to improve the management skills of the directorate of the civil registry.

V. Documentation

17. There is need to consolidate the documentation used in civil registration. Too many documents act as an impediment to smooth implementation and urgent steps should be taken to keep such documentation to a minimum consistent with the objectives of the registration process.

18. In particular, it should be noted that the list of topics recommended to be included in registration forms by both the United Nations and ECA are indicative. In the initial phase of a country project, the items should be kept to a minimum, account being taken of the country's human and technical resources.

VI. Logistic support

19. The success of any civil registration project depends in part on the ease of mobility of its staff, the distribution network for its forms and the printing and processing capability of the registry.

20. With respect to transport, it is recommended that wherever possible public transport should be used. Failing that, motor cycles and bicycles are usually to be preferred to vehicles which are expensive to run and maintain.

21. The Group recommends that all efforts should be made either to provide the registry with printing and processing equipment or to provide it with easy access to such facilities.

VII. Public education and enlightenment

22. In section II of this Programme of Action reference has already been made to the importance and need for a programme for public education and enlightenment. The usual information media (radio, TV and the press) should be used in such enlightenment campaign. However reliance on these conventional media is not enough especially for the rural areas. Person to person communication is the most effective means of enlightenment in such cases.

23. The machinery for the implementation of this strategy should be a ministry or organization or group of agencies with expertise in this area. The Central Registry should provide them with the resource material and administrative support for the enlightenment campaign.

VIII. Legislation

24. The Working Group endorsed the principle that civil registration laws whose content can only be changed by legislative amendments should contain only those major elements of the civil registration process which are fairly immutable. Rules and regulations, which can be changed by simple administrative processes should cover those elements of the registration process which are expected to respond to changing circumstances.

IX. Vital statistics

25. While recognising that in the initial phases of the civil registration system emphasis should be given to registration of events, the Working Group expressed the wish that the derivation of vital statistics from civil registration records should be initiated as soon as possible.

X. Government Commitment to Civil Registration

26. There was the need for a concerted effort to make African Governments aware of the importance of civil registration and also to allocate adequate financial and technical resources to project implementation. One method of sensitizing Governments is indicated in section XII below. In addition, ECA should try to bring up in appropriate inter-governmental meetings the importance of civil registration. The Government's share of the cost of implementing any project should also be clearly indicated and external donors should insist on a binding commitment to the provision of such counterpart funds by Governments before agreeing to fund projects.

XI. Collaboration among civil registrars and vital statisticians

27. In order to promote civil registration in the region, the Working Group proposed that ECA should explore the possibility of establishing an Association for African experts in the field of civil registration. ECA will prepare proposals on this and circulate them to interested persons for their comments. If a sufficient number of persons show interest in such an Association, a constitution would be drawn up for adoption by founder members.

XII. Technical and financial assistance

28. The Working Group expressed its gratitude to UNFPA for its continuing assistance to civil registration and vital statistics activities but expressed the hope that the 2 to 3 year limit set for projects in this area will not be rigidly adhered to. Each case for an extension should be considered on its own merits.

29. The Working Group also requested that the ECA post for Regional Adviser in Civil Registration (for English-speaking countries) which was abolished in 1982 should be re-instated as soon as possible.

30. The ITVPs should also establish a small Committee of African experts on civil registration to prepare a document to be used to convince high level officials of African governments on the importance of civil registration.

31. The Working Group also requests the World Health Organization through ECA to conduct ad hoc courses on coding of causes of death as well as help adapt lay reporting forms for use in Africa. Such technical assistance will be particularly required for countries which collect data on causes of death. Detailed arrangements should be worked out by ECA.

32. ECA was also requested to act as a Clearing House for the dissemination of information on civil registration activities in the region. For this purpose, the collaboration of all national civil registrars is required if ECA is to perform this function efficiently.

33. ECA was also requested to undertake a methodological study on the registration of births and deaths among nomadic populations.

EVALUATION OF WORKING GROUP

1. Overall the completed 25 evaluation forms indicate that participants were generally satisfied with the administrative organization, the content of the agenda and the discussions of the Working Group.

2. Explicity, the majority of the participants reported that the meeting was announced well in time and the duration was just right. However, some would like future Working Groups of the same nature to be longer in duration, say ten working days.

3. Although a significant number of the participants were satisfied with the facilities of the meeting, a few complained about the arrangements for local transportation and the payment of daily subsistence allowances. More important, it was suggested that background documents ought to have been sent to participants well before the meeting.

4. Participants considered that the quality and presentation as well as the discussions of the topics on the agenda were of high standard and practically oriented. However, suggestions were put forward about other issues which were either not on the agenda or not extensively discussed at the Working Group. These were:

- the uses of vital records
- the storage and retrieval of vital records
- evaluation of the progress in the coverage of civil registration systems
- demographic estimation techniques applicable to data from civil registration systems.

Finally, participants identified the lack of financial resources as the greatest problem in putting into practice in their various countries any knowledge or skills they might have acquired during the meeting.